

DOWN IN THE GLEN:

Sketches from the History of Glen Williams

By
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Glen Williams*



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Dedicated
to those whom time has forgotten
who spent some of their brief span in the Glen

"Williamsburgh . . . is situated on the banks of the Credit, between the 'everlasting hills,' on a beautiful flat. The business of this village is carried on principally by the sons of the first settler, old Mr. Williams, after whom the place is named. The water is pure, and perhaps one of the most valuable streams for machinery in the Province."

Canada Christian Advocate, Hamilton, 19 September 1848.

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THE GLEN WILLIAMS CEMETERY BOARD

1978

The first settlement

In the fall of 1824, a grant of 200 acres in the township of Esquesing was made by the crown to John Butler Muirhead, a barrister in the town of Niagara. Muirhead died later that year, and was buried in the Butler burying-ground outside of Niagara-on-the-Lake. He seemed to have known that the end was approaching, for shortly before his death he wrote a will, devising the land to James Muirhead and Thomas Butler. About a year later, on November 9th, 1825, the devisees of the will sold the land for £100 to *Benajah Williams* (1765 - 1851).¹

Benajah was then in his sixty-first year. He had been born in the colony of New York, whence his father Roger had emigrated from Wales. But during the rebellion, the family supported the loyalist cause, and by 1786 Benajah had joined the trek to the crown's new colony of Upper Canada. For a number of years he worked at Mr. Burch's mills in the Niagara district, before settling eventually in Gainsboro township, where the town of Stamford grew up. There his third wife, *Elizabeth* (1797-1851) bore some of his fifteen children, many of whom would live in the Glen: Joel (1806-1871), Lydia (1809-1871), Charles (1811-1889), George (1813-1836), Jacob (1816-1853), Ira (1818-1833), Isaac (1820-1911), Anna, Israel, David and Ezra.²

When the family arrived, "there was not a clearing near him, nothing but a dense forest, and they in common with all the early pioneers suffered many privations, but still they always kept up good hearts, and worked with a will and trusted in Providence."³ It is unlikely that they would have come to their new property as soon as it had been bought, and faced the onset of a long, cold winter on uncleared land. So the Glen probably saw its first settlers in the spring of 1826.

The neighbouring lot in the ninth concession was granted to the Canada Company in 1829, and sold only in 1833--to Benajah. In the 11th concession, lot 21 also went to the Canada Company, to be sold in 1838 to Joel Williams, now a blacksmith. The north part of lot 20 in the 10th concession was assigned by the crown as late as 1856--to Charles Williams. One of the first separations was in 1833, when Benajah sold an acre and a half on the south side of the Credit to Peter Fox, a tanner. But it was only in the 1840's that land in the village began to be sold to people outside the Williams family to any extent.

In the surrounding countryside, the story was the same: some land was granted in the 1820's while other ground lay idle till the thirties and forties. The records of mortgages raised and of creditor's meetings suggest the difficulty some of the early farmers had in making their land pay.

The saw and flour mills

One of the first requirements of a new community was a saw mill, to provide lumber for the buildings that would have to be erected, cutting wood from the land as it was cleared. So this would have been established almost at once: the *Historical Atlas* dates it from 1825, but as we have seen, the village was not settled until the next year. The saw mill was the major concern of Charles Williams, the man who seemed at the centre of most of the endeavours of the fledgling community, and who was given the respectful title of Squire Williams. Charles was one of Benajah's children born at Stamford; who came with him to the Glen. By the mid-sixties, he was proprietor of the flour, woolen and saw mills, as well as being a justice of the peace.

In Esquesing he married an Irish girl, Mary Jane Browne, in 1836. His sons took over the running of most of thier father's mills during the decade after confederation.

Fire was the great enemy of pioneer settlements, and in 1866 there was a large fire in Charles Williams' woods. The saw mill partly suffered; the upper part of the brick store beside it was damaged; a rake factory was consumed and several houses narrowly escaped. The *Canadian Champion* reported:

The Glenwilliams engine fell a victim to the impetuosity of its keepers, and was itself extinguished by the elements it was intended to overcome.⁴

But the mill carried on, and in 1877 it was capable of producing 14,000 feet of lumber per day.

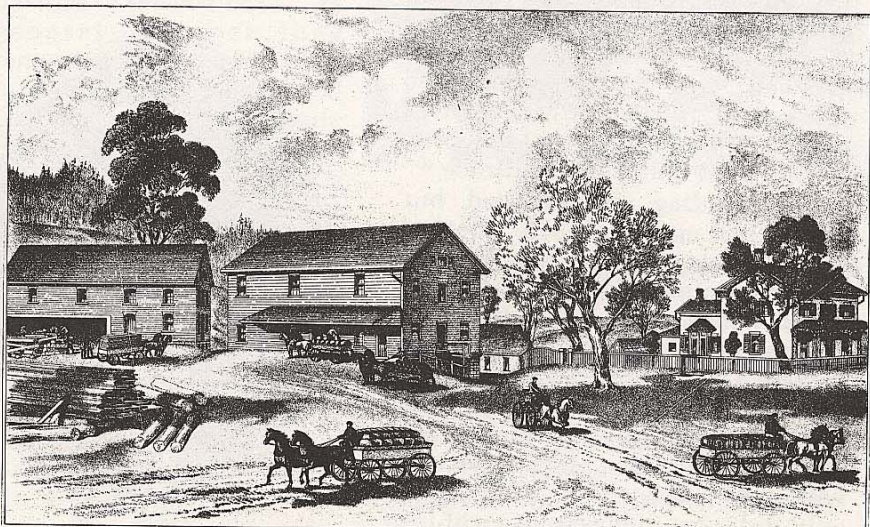
Charles had competition. There was a second sawmill operated by Joseph Tweddle. Tweddle had been a housejoiner in Chinguacousy when he bought property in the Glen, in 1854, along with Frederick White, another joiner, who lived in Esquesing. He chaired the meeting in 1870 at which it was decided to build the town hall. In 1872, Tweddle sold his mill to Richard Hurst the younger, who seemingly operated it as a shoddy mill. Shoddy was a woolen yarn made by shredding old rags and adding new wool. The venture was not a profitable one, and in 1876 Hurst's creditors had the property put up for auction.

There was a third saw mill on "the Mountain," run by steam. It had been erected by Charles Symons of Acton, and was leased and run by Cooper and sons of the Glen. It burned down in the summer of 1876.⁶



Along with a saw mill, the other essential was a flour mill. This too was long owned by Charles Williams, then by his son *Joseph* (1844-1920). It ran day and night, and even produced flour for export to foreign markets. But it was relatively small: in 1877 it was turning out 400 barrels of flour a week, compared to the 200 barrels a day ground in Norval. As other crops took over from wheat, it would be the larger mills that survived.

Joseph seemed to be patriarch of the third generation, for he also took over the adjoining sawmill. This was purchased by H. P. Lawson (1840-1920) of Georgetown, who had a number of lumbering interests in the area. The water powered a dynamo to generate electricity, and when silt accumulated around the dam, the plant was converted to work from a steam boiler. This provided the electricity for The Georgetown Electric Light and Power Company, Limited, which was used at the turn of the century in the neighbouring town. "The lights were on only until mid-evening but, if you were having a gathering at the house the power could be extended for a small fee."⁷



FLOUR, SAW MILL AND RESIDENCE OF JOS^{PH} WILLIAMS, ESQ.
GLENWILLIAMS, ONTARIO.

ROLPH SMITH & CO TORONTO

The woolen mills

According to the *Historical Atlas* a woolen mill, built of wood, was erected in 1839 by Jacob Williams, another of Benajah's sons. Jacob was described as a carder and clothier the following year, when he became one of the first trustees of the Methodist church in the village. He was also to be one of the first trustees of the cemetery. When he died in 1853,⁸ at the age of 37, his elder brother Charles took over the property.

The building provided space for smaller manufacturers as well. In 1866 it housed Brown's Pump Factory and Bradshaw's Comb Factory, and the *Canadian Champion* reported that both were doing well. But the following year the old mill was destroyed by fire. Charles Bradshaw and Robert Brown went in with John Hunt and Company to make pumps and bobbins, and to do general woodworking. They were proud to receive an "order from Chas. Raymond, of sewing machine celebrity, Guelph, for 20,000 machine handles, and the same number of handles for screwdrivers." By 1877, however, Charles Williams had bought the bobbin factory, and Brown was back to making pumps on his own.⁹

After the fire of 1867, Charles Williams proceeded to erect a new, stone mill. He was plagued by bad fortune, however, as the work progressed the following year. A number of people were raising some heavy timber to the upper portion of the factory, when the beam on which they were standing broke, and they were hurled down 30 feet to the cellar. Three men were killed, and many more were injured. The dead were William Carson, a bachelor labourer who lived at Joel Williams' house; Joseph Wiswell, who was about 40 years old; and William Roden, a storekeeper in the village. Carson was an Irish Orangeman and a Volunteer, and a member of the Good Templars; Wiswell was a Canadian who worked at the mill. Mr. Roden's general store was in what had been an old hotel above the mill race.¹⁰

The building was finished, but fire struck again in 1875. Charles' son Benajah (B. 1842) now became the proprietor, and rebuilt it on a grander scale: two and a half stories high and powered by a 40 horse power Leffel water-wheel. Not wanting to tempt fate again, the building was heated by steam and equipped with a system of water-works for quenching fires. Not only did it provide employment for 50 to 60 hands directly; it also used 450 pounds of Canadian wool daily.

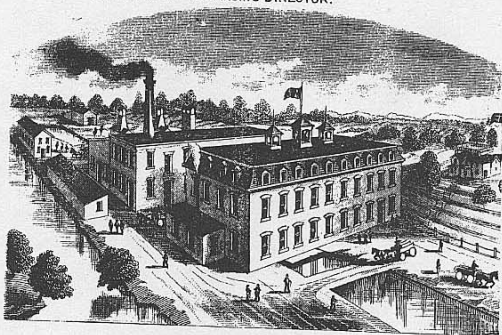


In the century to come, first imported wool from Australia, then synthetic fibres and finally inexpensive knitted goods from countries like Taiwan or Korea made the Canadian woollen and knitting industries more and more difficult. But a hundred years ago a mill like the Williams mill provided work in the village and in the surrounding countryside as well.

Though the Creelman brothers in Georgetown manufactured knitting machines, the mill bought the latest cards, spinning machines, twistors and knitting machines built by Davis and Furber in Northampton, Massachusetts. The rebuilding and re-equipping was expensive, costing \$32,000. And though the *Historical Atlas* stated that the "goods are obtaining a very high reputation with the wholesale trade of the Dominion, and are fast taking the lead over all other Canadian foods of similar manufacture," the burden was too heavy. By November 1877 it was being reported that Ben Williams had failed and run away. His debts had risen to the cost of rebuilding the factory and more, and in January 1878 the *Toronto Globe* advertised the sale of the mill. It appeared to stay in the family, with brother Joseph (who owned the flour mill) assuming responsibility.¹¹

By 1894 the mill was operated by the Sykes and Ainley Manufacturing Company. Like so many residents of the Glen, John Sykes (1833-1909) was a Yorkshireman. His daughter Clara (1859-1949) married Norman Ainley (1858-1938), who became a partner in the business. As general manager they bought out another Englishman, Harry Holdroyd (1864-1949), whose wife Evangeline (1870-1952) was a daughter of Joseph Williams, so the family connection continued. Holdroyd later ran his own spinning business in Toronto.

JOHN SYKES, PRESIDENT & MANAGING DIRECTOR.



The Glen Woollen Mills Company Limited was organized in 1907 to carry on the business. Most of the partners of this company lived in England, with H. P. Lawson of Georgetown (the Vice-President) and E. Y. Barraclough (who came about 1911 as Secretary-Treasurer and General Manager) as the only Canadian directors. E. Y. Barraclough (1874-1936) lived in the big brick house on Mountain Street, above the mill. To save walking down the terraces to the main entrance, a bridge went from the house across to the top floor of the mill. The

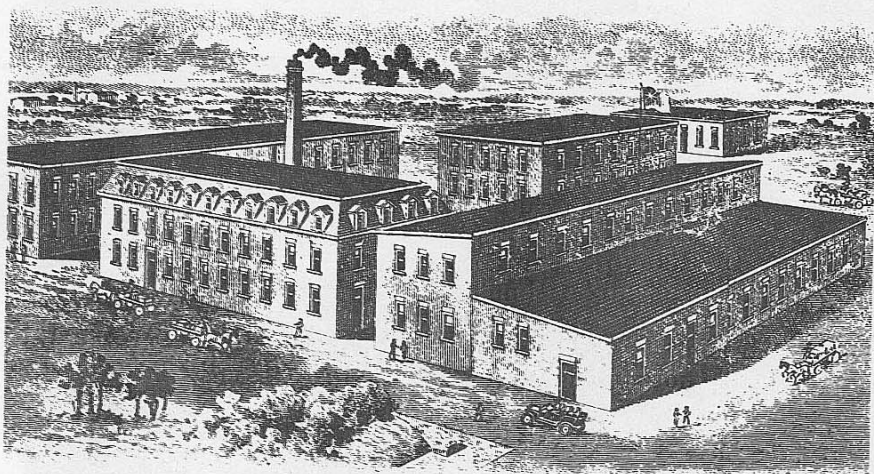
mill processed wool from when it left the sheep's back until it was ready for the loom or knitting machine. The looms wove grey blankets, robe linings, fancy buggy rugs, wool horse blankets, kersey (a coarse narrow cloth, woven from the long wool and usually ribbed) and collar check, as well as carpet and knitting yarns.

About the time the Glen Woolen Mills took over, the Melrose Knitting Company Limited was set up as a subsidiary. It produced about 45,000 dozen pairs of men's wool socks and lumberman's socks a year. Sixty to Seventy people worked there, and a hundred could have been employed if they could be found. Because of the shortage of labour, 12 English automatic machine were installed; they seemed "to be possessed of almost human intelligence," and with the care of two boys, they knit 60 dozen pairs of socks a day. The mill was run by water power, though a 100 horsepower boiler and engine used for heating and drying could provide emergency power; and their own dynamo produced the electricity to run delicate machinery and lighting.¹² After Barraclough's death, the mill passed through a number of operators, and was destroyed by fire in 1954.



About the time that Benajah Williams was having financial difficulties, an Irish millright named James Bradley bought the old shoddy mill upstream, along with five carding machines and the largest picker. Bradley already had a bobbin factory, but he found that running by steam was running him into debt, and he looked forward to selling the boiler and moving where he could run by steam. Concern about energy costs is not just a modern phenomenon.

Bradley found he was spending most of his time erecting a mill in Limehouse, so he rented his Glen Williams establishment to George Ross. Ross, however, took sick, and Bradley then rented the mill to Samuel Beaumont (1840-1906). Beaumont was a native of Holmfirth, Yorkshire, in the heart of the woollen manufacturing district. He was taught his trade by his father, and after working a few years in Scotland, came in 1840 to Canada. Here he worked at Galt and Ancaster; in 1875-1876 he operated the woollen mills at Kilbride, and in 1877 did the same in Norval. The mill there was destroyed by fire in 1878, and as he had no insurance he lost heavily. It was from Norval that he came to the Glen. He gave his landlord "an unearthy heap of wrangling" over the method of paying the rent (Bradley wanted rent in advance, which was difficult after suffering such a major loss). But they had a lot in common, and Bradley continued to help him set up, bringing in machinery from Norval and from Ben Williams' factory. By 1882, Beaumont was able to purchase the mill. He had not been long established, however, when (in the early 1880's) fire struck again. Samuel was in the building at the time, and narrowly escaped with his life. It had been impossible to insure such inflammable stock, and there was only \$750 insurance. But he started again, erected substantial buildings, and made three trips to England to purchase the best machinery to outfit them.



JOS. BEAUMONT'S MILL.

His wife Emma was also from Yorkshire; she was the daughter of a prominent indigo-dyer in the village of Burnlea, Joseph Harpin. Samuel Beaumont was an Anglican and a conservative, and a prominent mason. For several terms he was a member of the township board of health, and for 18 years he was a member of the Glen Williams public school board. Around 1904 a long illness of paralysis and complications began, which lasted until his death in March of 1906.¹³

As had happened at the Williams woollen mill, the fires seemed to cost too heavy a toll, and Samuel Beaumont also got into financial difficulties. His son Joseph (1863-1943), took over the operation and when the bank manager stopped making his weekly walk from Georgetown to check the company's books, people assumed the business was out of the red. In 1906 Joseph acquired the Dominion Glove Works, which had been operating about a quarter of a century. It was a related business, for the machines which knit the socks also knit the mitt cuffs. The mill used mostly New Zealand wool, which was judged to be finer and more uniform than Canadian; and the leather was mostly imported from the States. About 200 dozen pair of socks (which would sell at 25 to 50 cents a pair) were made daily, and about 40 dozen pair of mitts and gloves (selling at 50 cents to a dollar). The mill employed eighty to a hundred workers.¹⁴

When Joseph died, his son Arthur (1896-1974) carried on the business until 1957, making it a three generation family business. During the second world war, Arthur represented the heavy hosiery section of the Canadian Woollen and Knit Goods on the Wartime Prices and Trade Board. And he continued the family tradition of being active in church and community affairs.¹⁵



In the countryside

One of the pioneer settlers in the country, on the 10th line was *John Courcer Cook* (1802-1858), who came as a single young man to settle on 100 acres.

After clearing 30 acres for wheat, he managed to save his own pork and bread which was the bill of fare for about two years. A cow bought dear and brought from a long distance got killed by a falling tree . . . he married a Mrs. Bedford [*Harriet Cook* (1804 - 1838) . . .] A cow she brought and her furniture. A comfortable house was built of peeled logs, also a barn and sheds.

As the family grew, the mother sewed all the dresses, and the father made all the boots and shoes. (Despite the fact that the village had two shoemakers in the 1850's: *Thomas Crane* and *Michael Harding*.)

During the rebellion of 1837, Cook, who had a team, "was engaged in her Majesty's service conveying troops from Esquesing to Hamilton three days from the 25th December 1837 to the 28th . . ."

In his fifties, "his health broke awfully with a dangerous *Erysipelas* . . . and although he gained in flesh his spirits were low. Eventually a violent disentry carried him off after a short illness. He had a good reputation, and though he seldom talked religion, he read his bible. His will began with an affirmation of trust: "Principally and first of all I give and recommend my soul into the hand of Almighty God that gave it and my body I commend to the earth to be buried in decent Christian burial . . ." He was probably the *John Cook*, yeoman, who was one of the original trustees for the cemetery.¹⁶

At mid-century the main crops in the township were wheat, oats, peas, potatoes, maple sugar, wool and butter. Ten years later barley, turnips, flax and hemp and cheese had been added to the list. The Crimean war had caused a grain boom, but when the market levelled, many grain speculators went bankrupt. That and the growing concentration of the milling business meant that local mills had hard times, and in the late 1850's most of the mills in Halton and Peel changed hands. The grain fields were getting worked out, and the wet years of the early sixties resulted in crop failures from midge (*Hessian fly*) and smut. When the farmers in the fall of 1876 were grumbling about midge and rust, *James Bradley* advised the *Milton News Office*, "we think however so soon as *John A.* is in power again both midge and rust will disappear." But farmers were turning to other crops. During the American civil war an embargo cut off the supply of cotton to mills in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. A second source of thread and cloth had to be found, and this led to farmers planting flax, like *John Leslie*, who set 10 acres in flax in 1866. And in the Glen Mr. *Hunt* set up a new flax mill, like the *Mitchell* enterprise in Norval and the huge *Hyde* mill at Streetsville. But the flax boom was an artificial one, and it did not last.¹⁷

By the mid-seventies another new crop was hops. The most prominent grower in the early years of this century was *Robert Logan*, who grew hops behind his house on the ninth line just before the

tracks. Indians would come in the fall to pick them, and would get 50 cents for a large box. They had to be careful not to jolt the box, or the hops would settle and they would have to pick more. The hops were cured in four kilns, before being sold to the Brain brothers' brewery in Hornby.¹⁸



Brick and stone

Though the river provided the power that attracted the first villagers and gave rise to infant industries, it was not the Glen's only resource, or even a lasting one. It was not just the advent of new forms of energy, like steam engines and gasoline motors and hydro power from a distance, which stole the river's importance. A saw mill, for example, was important as long as there were ancient trees to be felled. But as the land was cleared and grain was planted where once there had been forests, there was naturally less lumber to be cut. Besides, it was not unusual for a kerosene lamp to get knocked over or a spark to escape from the fireplace. If you lived, as some people did until the 1940's, in a house with a dirt floor, you were a little safer. But if you lived in a frame house, your home could very quickly go up in flames.

So people thought of brick homes and of stone mills with more confidence. Brickmaking was usually a local industry, and the *Historical Atlas* shows brickyards on either side of the road going out of the village, just before the 10th line. One was run by John Leslie, who had come out from Ireland in 1821, and who made bricks as a

sideline to farming. The other was on the property of John S. Fraser. In 1878, Bradley reported that Leslie and Fraser's brickyards were in a prosperous state that season. The red clay (from which Terra Cotta derives its name) produced a normal red-coloured brick, but if people wanted to work in a fancy touch, they could obtain white brick from Caledon.¹⁹ Many of the village's brick buildings must be made from the local product.

At Silver Creek the principle industry, according to the *Historical Atlas*, was quarrying, and it supplied a great deal of the stone for the international bridge at Buffalo. No quarries were shown on the mountain outside Glen Williams, but it would soon be a major source of Credit Valley stone. Hugh Logan farmed 400 acres near the Grand Trunk Railway line. Though he continued to raise fancy driving horses and Holstein cattle, in 1899 he began devoting himself to the quarrying of Credit Valley freestone on his property. The freestone lay under ten to fourteen feet of soil and broken limestone, and was about 20 feet in length. Stone from the Logan quarries was used for post offices from Ganonoque to Lake Huron, the CPR station at Goderich, Casa Loma, the parliament building in Toronto and Eaton Memorial church there. It took forty to fifty men and seven teams of horses to work the quarries.²⁰

Another quarry was owned by Mac Bell, later by Hirst and Rogers, and another by Tom Sykes (now by Argo). Stone has a grain in it, like wood. Sometimes the frost gets into the grain and destroys the rock, so little quarrying was done during the winter. But the ground was prepared then, and the earth stripped off by pick and shovel down to the bed of rock. In the early spring the quarry would be opened. Holes were drilled in the rock, then filled with dynamite or powder to blow it loose. Horse-drawn derricks would lift out the stone, which would be swung out to a level place where it could be cut by the bankerman and then dressed. The wheels on wagons in the quarry were a foot wide.²¹

Limestone would also be used to produce mortar. The *Historical Atlas* shows three lime kilns on William McClure's property, on the west side of the 9th line up on the mountain. You can still see the remains of one of those kilns today, looking like an enormous stone fireplace. The limestone would be burned to produce quicklime, or burned lime. Water was added to get slaked lime, which combined with the quicklime to form a light, white powder. The powder was mixed with sand or used alone to become mortar.

The Methodist church

It took long years to see forests change to clear land, and to dig out the stumps and stones before the work of planting could begin. Once the ground was more workable and the homes were more comfortable, there were still the trials of hard times and disease to be coped with. Without our modern machinery, our welfare and our medicine, the pioneers had to be a patient and sturdy lot. Like the Williams family, they "worked with a will and trusted in Providence."

Their faith was important to them, and they brought with them a desire for churches where it could be upheld week by week, and where births and weddings and funerals in the community could be marked. Methodists had an advantage in that they sent around itinerant ministers to the little communities that were too small to support a clergyman of their own. When the saddlebags preacher was away on the other parts of his circuit, the local people took over, and developed a strong sense of lay leadership.

There were a number of different Methodist connections in Upper Canada. The Wesleyan Methodists listed Glen Williams as a point on its Georgetown circuit from 1856 to 1869, and held services in the town hall later. But the village had already been claimed for the Methodist Episcopal church, which came to Upper Canada by way of the United States. The Williams family may have been associated with the ME's there; at any rate they supported the church here, and Charles and Jacob were among the first trustees of the congregation. The other trustees were the minister, Morris Kennedy; a yeoman,



Henry Grass; and a carpenter and joiner, George Kennedy (who gave his name to the neighbouring village of Georgetown). In 1840 Benajah Williams put his shaky signature to the deed which sold the church its land, for five shillings. When the new brick church was built in 1903 (was there a little rivalry with their Anglican neighbours, who were putting up their stone church across the river?), a stone was cut to indicate that the congregation dated back to 1837. The Methodist Episcopal church became part of the Methodist Church in 1884 (which included the Wesleyans), and this in turn helped to form the United Church of Canada in 1925.

The cemetery

When the land was first being settled, cemeteries often grew up around the local churches. The 1840 deed to the Methodist Episcopal church in Glen Williams provided a site for "a Church Meeting-House or Chapel and Burying-ground." But the spot down by the river was not an appropriate place for burials, and it does not appear that any took place there.

In the countryside, farmers often just marked off part of their property to be used as a family cemetery. In the Glen the Williams chose a spot on the hill, overlooking the village, for this purpose. The earliest stone I have found marks the resting-place of Ira, Elizabeth and Benajah's son, who died in 1833 just eleven days after his fifteenth birthday. Another son, George, lies nearby; he died in 1836, also at a tender age; he was 23. A grandson, Alfred (Joel's boy) died in 1844.

Others besides the family used the cemetery. There is a memorial to Robert Brown, who died in 1834. That is on a stone that was put up in 1876, and it is uncertain whether he is buried there. But near the Williams plot there are stones from 1845, for *Latham Stull*, and for *Margaret*, wife of *Jacob Stull*.

Benajah Williams died on November 22nd 1851. His son Charles must have felt that the time had come for the cemetery to be established on a more regular basis, and on December 22nd he made over the land for a public burying-ground, "in consideration of the sum of one shilling of lawful money of the Province of Canada to him in hand paid." His brother Joel (now described as a carpenter, rather than a blacksmith as in an earlier deed) and another brother Jacob, were among the first trustees. The others were *John Cook* and *John Stull*, yeoman, and *Thomas B. Frasier*, tailor.

The original grant was of one acre, but with the passage of time, more land came to be needed. The oldest section bordered on the road, and is easily distinguished by the old limestone markers in it. In 1905 the Sykes and Ainley mill donated the piece of land between it and the top of the bank of the hill above the river. A further piece was bought for thirty dollars in 1919. It was purchased from *John Haines* (1870-1932), a native of Somerset, who purchased *Fred Cook's* orchard and farm next to the cemetery. Then in 1957 *Sheridan Nurseries* gave a further piece to the cemetery board.

It had been the practice for people to look after the plots where they had relatives buried. The fences remaining around some family plots showed the limit of what had to be cared for. As families moved away from the village, however, that would leave some places untended. So an annual charge for upkeep was levied. Sometimes there was a question about who actually did work on their own plot. One letter to the board enclosed six dollars for care for the years 1933-1935, with a note that before that they did their own work on the plot.

At other times, people did not appreciate the work that was done. A 1929 letter reads:

I understand you put men to work in the Glen Cemetery to decorate or rather burn Peoples shrubs and blacken monuments -- one of the shrubs on our Plot has been cut down; kindly let me know who did this for they will certainly have to replace it.

In the depression years, people found it difficult to pay for upkeep. The executor of an estate in 1931 returned a statement to the board, explaining that he could not see his way clear to participate at this time. With these problems, the board in 1931 tried to put the cemetery on a perpetual care basis, but this took a number of years to achieve. The annual service at the cemetery was one way of raising some extra money to do the work that had to be done.

Burial customs

Isaac Williams had been in partnership with John Holt, making pumps and shingles, though they dissolved their partnership by mutual agreement in 1856. Isaac continued in woodworking and in the mid-sixties had a chair and cabinet factory. And he had the traditional side-line of making coffins. A Milton furniture dealer of the same era, Benjamin Jones, advertised "Coffins made to order on short notice." The ad was not so odd as it sounds today, since some people kept their own coffins ready for when they would be needed. But the typesetter mistakenly changed the undertaker's name from B. Jones to E. Bones.²²

Around 1873 J. G. Willson (d. 1903) opened a business in Georgetown as an undertaker and furniture dealer. His son W. H. Willson (who married into the Williams family) obtained his certificate from the School of Embalming, and enjoyed "the fullest confidence or a large circle of patrons."²³ Occasionally services would be held at his shop on the main street, simply using furniture from the store for people to sit. Harold McClure opened his furniture and undertaking business in 1927. This is presently continued, now simply as a funeral home, by Jim Jones and his son Phil.

Their funeral home in Georgetown had its first service in 1941, and during that decade it became more usual for services to take place there: about half of the funeral during the forties were from the

REMOVAL.

The Subscriber has removed to the Store next door to W. D. & R. A. Lyon, where he is prepared to sell

Furniture
AT
LOW PRICES
COFFINS

Made to order on short notice.



Coffins of all sizes and descriptions made promptly. Prices from \$10 to \$24.

E. BONES.

Milton, Oct. 11, 1864.

20 17

funeral home. In the early years of the century, however, the body would be kept at home and the service would take place either there or in the church.

The body would be placed on a low, wicker cooling board over a tray of ice, and covered with a purple blanket. As embalming became more common in the late twenties and thirties, the undertaker would take battery-powered lights with him to work, as many homes were without electricity. A funeral crepe of mauve or black would be hung on the door of the house, and it was here that the visiting of the family would take place. After the funeral, the pall-bearers, suitably attired with pall-bearers' gloves, would carry the body out to the hearse. People of this area could take advantage of the benefits of technology, and use the services of the "motorized hearse" owned by Billy Willson.

On the way to the cemetery, stores would close down while the funeral passed. Harold Wheeler always turned off the lights of the general store in the Glen when a procession passed on its way up the cemetery hill. The custom may have had its origins many centuries ago during the plague years, when people would close their shutters as bodies were taken by.

At the grave itself, an oak or pine rough-box or planking covered the casket. Concrete vaults developed in the States about 1910, and began to be used in this area around 1940. This was a bit earlier than in other parts of Ontario, and was probably encouraged by a scare of grave robbing south of Brampton at the time. The vaults hinder our consciousness that earth returns to earth, but they help to keep the ground intact. It was partly the appearance of a number of sunken graves after a few years that led to the starting of remembrance services to help care for the grounds. Now, however, many cemeteries are starting to wonder whether the vaults are really an advantage.

The loss of a close relative was long observed as well as remembered, and it was not uncommon a couple of generations ago for a black armband or "widow's weeds" to be worn for a year after a death. The elaborate Victorian observances of mourning seem strange to us, but they helped them to express and work through their grief.

Saint Alban's Church

In the mid-1870's, Anglican services were held at the new town hall, with James Bradley or one of the other parishioners fetching Mr. Boulton from Georgetown to officiate. It was an age when nothing was wasted, and when Boulton once asked Bradley to supply some straw for his horse, the latter agreed, on the condition that the manure was returned. There was a lapse in services for a while, but in 1899 the Reverend E. A. Vesey founded a mission in the Glen. When Rose Ann McMaster left her home to the church, plans were begun for the building of a church (despite the bishop's suggestion that the Glen people would be better off continuing to attend church in

Georgetown). The architect was F. S. Baker, the son of a woollen miller in Kilbride who was one of that town's founders, and a friend of Joesph Beaumont. Baker was a talented man, who would later be President of the Royal Institute of Canadian Architects. He also designed the Trader's Bank of Canada, Toronto's first skyscraper: one wonders what he would think of the Toronto skyline today.²⁴ The conerstone was laid in 1902, and the church opened the following year.



The town hall

A *Gazetteer and Directory* for the county was published in 1868, describing the villages and listing many of their residents. The more generous subscribers appeared in capitals, and were more likely to be mentioned in the write-up of the community. So William McMaster (1814-1872) was mentioned as a grocer, but prospective customers were advised that "everything in the grocery line may be had at Watkin's grocery store." William Watkins sold things not now considered as groceries: crockery, glassware and liquor. He was postmaster, and had another sideline: "He also attends to the wants of those matrimonially inclined, by furnishing them with the necessary licence." Assuming, of course, that those matrimonially inclined had a prospective spouse: in 1866 one lady resident of the village advertised in *The Canadian Champion* for a husband.²⁵

Not everyone approved of the liquor business, and the Glen had its own temperance organization, the Good Templars (Royal Oak Temple No. 552). It was in part the active support of this group that enabled the village to pceed with their plans in 1870 to erect a town hall. The Templars were represented by Rufus S. McCrea (1837-1912), a grocer who didn't sell liquor, and by Joseph Williams and T. H. Janes. The decision to build a hall had been made in 1870 at a meeting in the house of Charles Williams, and a good cross-section of the community was active in support.²⁶ The site was to be "along side of the Brick Store." On the other side was the brick blacksmith and carriage shop of William Tost (1830-1910), an Englishman who



settled in 1846 and was the manufacturer and proud patentee of a celebrated iron beam harrow. After the inevitable delays, the new brick hall was opened on the 24th of May 1871, with a concert to liquidate the debt.

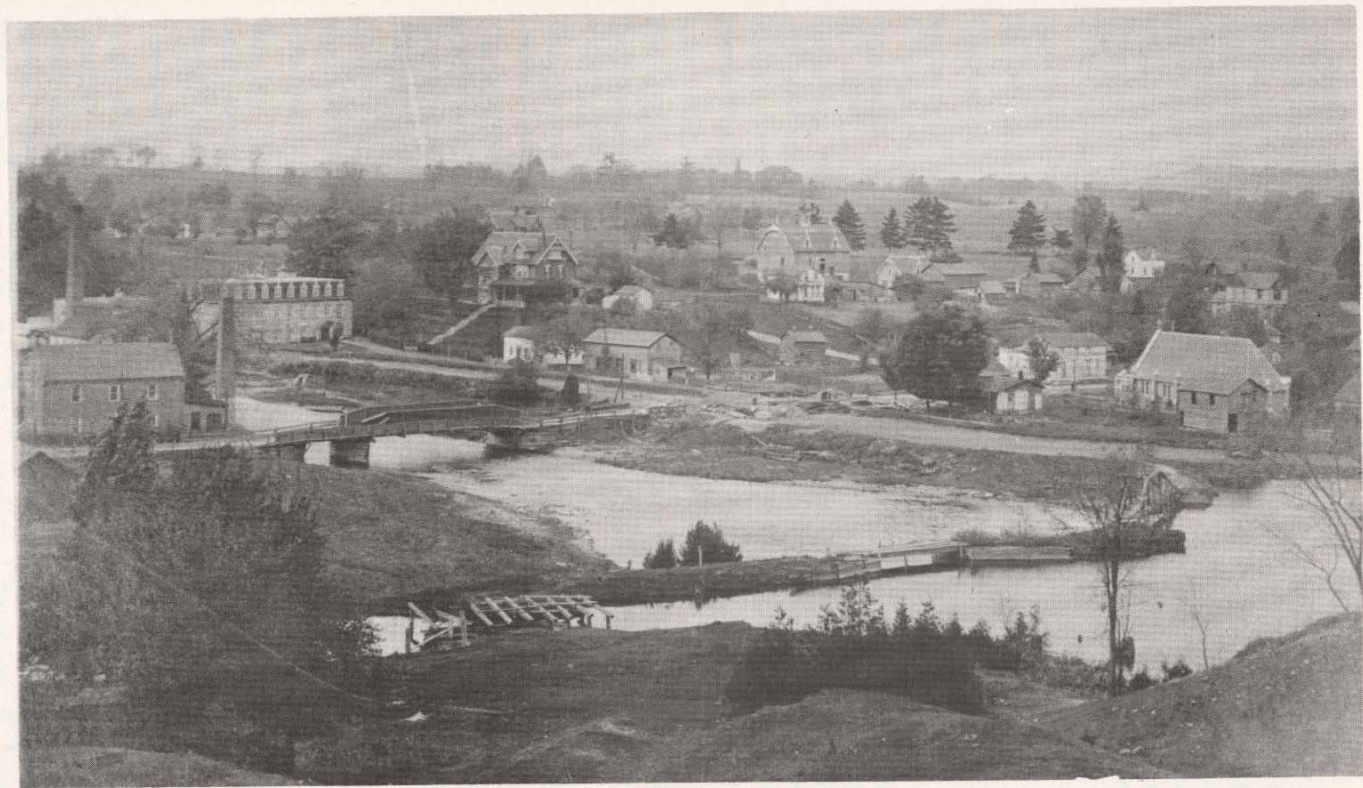
The hall was much used, not just for meetings, but also for parties and concerts, band practices, church services and Sunday schools. The Wesleyan Methodists preached there on alternate Sundays, and in 1873 "the English church people" began to hold services there. A caretaker was appointed in 1879 and he was authorized to rent the hall, provided he did "not let to any but regularly established Christian denominations for religious or Divine Service." The previous winter an ex-monk named Widows spent some time in the Glen and in other towns in the area, "making himself generally notorious by preaching, lecturing accompanied by boistrous behavior." His followers would keep the hall for him to use after a church service, and on one occasion the Georgetown constables attended church to prevent the Widows gang from holding the building after the service. Once evicted, Widows mounted a wagon and harranged the assembled crowd until dark. It was to avoid men like this that the rule was passed, though it must have been difficult at times to draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable religion. On Good Friday of the same year, a "reformed roman catholic" gave a lecture in the hall, after which the audience all retired to the tavern and the lecturer read their characters as a spiritualist and clairvoyant. There were tamer entertainments, as when Mr. Watson gave a talk on "Jolly jokes for jolly folks."²⁷

The post office

The village was originally called Williamsburg after its founding family, and continued to be so described as late as 1851, in the cemetery deed. In 1852, however, a post office was established. Since there was already Williamsburg post offices in the township by the same name (in Dundas county), the post office here was designated Glenwilliams. W. Watkins is listed as

postmaster in the 1867 *Gazetteer* and in the 1877 *Atlas*, though that book also describes Charles Willaims as having the same post. In 1883 Andrew Wheeler (1849-1922) sold his nearby farm and took over the McCrea's general store, and two years later became postmaster. The store and post office were carried on through three generations, through John A. Wheeler and Harold Wheeler (1906-1971). In 1967, letter carrier delivery was established in the village, and the Glen became Sub Post Office 3 of Georgetown. At that time the residents were assured they could continue to use Glen Williams as their postal address. Since then, however, the village post office has closed, and while one Postmaster General had said it would still not be necessary to change their postal address, another has said "the designation 'Glen Williams' no longer exists."²⁸ To residents of the village, however, Glen Williams still exists, and is very much alive.





Notes

- ¹ The crown deed is presently in the possession of Mr. and Mrs. J. K. Williams of Toronto. It granted the north-east half of lot 21 in the 10th concession and the south-west half of lot 21 in the 9th concession to Muirhead. The relevant part of Muirhead's will and the bill of sale to Benajah Williams are in the Halton registry office. The *Historical Atlas of the County of Halton* (Toronto, 1877) errs in the details of the size of the property, the people involved and the dates (pp. 56, 67).
- ² Family history, courtesy of Mrs. J. K. Williams.
- ³ *Historical Atlas of the County of Halton*, p. 66.
- ⁴ *The Canadian Champion*, Milton, 24 May 1866.
- ⁵ Registry office, deeds for lot 22, con. 10 and lots 23 and 24, con. 11. A large marker in the cemetery tells of the death of his two daughters. He seems to have remained in the area after selling the mill. I have used the spelling found on deeds and the tombstone, rather than Tweedle, the name in the *Historical Atlas* and now used for the street which was also called the Avenue or Bronco Avenue. Joseph Street also is probably named after him.
- ⁶ James Bradley letterbook, 1 August 1876.
- ⁷ John McDonald, *Halton Sketches* (1976), p. 9.
- ⁸ The *Historical Atlas* says that Jacob died in 1854, but his tombstone says he died on the 12th of July 1853, and that his widow, Francis Huestis, lived till 1887.
- ⁹ *The Canadian Champion*, 9 August 1866, 9 September 1869; *Halton Gazetteer*, p. 14; *Historical Atlas*, p. 56.
- ¹⁰ *The Halton Herald*, Georgetown, 8 October 1868 (clipping in possession of Mr. and Mrs. J. K. Williams); L. Grant in *The Georgetown Herald*, 9 April 1924; *The Canadian Champion*, 9 August 1866.
- ¹¹ Bradley diary, 17 November, 4 December 1877, 11, 29, January, 1, 21, February 1878; Bradley letterbook, 7 January 1878.
- ¹² *The Herald*, 17 December 1913.
- ¹³ Bradley diary, 28 June 1878 and passim; obituary in *The Georgetown Herald*, 28 March 1906.
- ¹⁴ *The Herald*, 17 December 1913.
- ¹⁵ *The Independent*, Georgetown, August 1974.
- ¹⁶ Copy of a letter by Andrew Duff and 1837 certificate signed by Captain Alexander McNabb; register of baptisms, St. George's Anglican Church, Georgetown; will at registry office.
- ¹⁷ *Halton Gazetteer*, p. 43; William Tolton to the author, 1 April 1976; Bradley letterbook; *The Canadian Champion*, 9 August 1866.

- 18 Conversation with Albert (Nick) Carter, March 1975.
- 19 Bradley diary, 28 January, 28 August 1878; Bradley letterbook May 1878.
- 20 *The Herald*, 17 December 1913.
- 21 Carter conversation; conversation with Norm Norton, 20 February 1978.
- 22 *The Halton Journal*, Milton, 20 March 1857; 1865 deed (Barber to John Hunt, lot 21, con. 10); L. Grant in *The Herald*, 2 April 1924; *The Canadian Champion*, 30 August 1866.
- 23 *The Herald*, 17 December 1913.
- 24 *Canadian Men and Women of the Times* (Toronto 1912) p. 52.
- 25 Watkin's wife Zippy (c. 1847-1909) is buried in the cemetery. See *Halton Gazetteer*, 20 September, 4 October 1866.
- 26 The first meeting was led by Joseph Tweddle, B. Williams, John Murray, Charles Williams, John Hurst and William Tost. George H. Kennedy, Daniel Cook and John Frazer also helped on the building committee, and the first trustees included J. Hunt, William Kerr and Joseph Williams, as well as some of the aforementioned. *Town Hall Minute Book*.
- 27 *Town Hall Minute Book*, 6 February 1879; Bradley diary, 5, 28 January, 19 April, 1 July 1878.
- 28 André Ouellet to Terry O'Connor, MP, 11 June 1973; Jean-Jacques Blais to Dr. Frank A. Philbrook, MP, 17 August 1977; Frank W. Campbell, *Canada Post Offices 1755-1895* (Boston 1972), p. 63.